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Lámhleabhar Poiblíochta

Manual of Publicity

CONFIDENTIAL — FAOI RÚN

This manual has been prepared solely for the information and guidance of Sinn Féin members. It is not for public sale or distribution.

The Director of Publicity is grateful for assistance received in the composition, design and illustration of this manual.

It is hoped that the contents will be studied seriously and implemented efficiently.

The golden rule which applies to all kinds of publicity, spoken or written, is this : always use short simple words and short simple sentences.

An Roinn Poiblíochta, Sinn Féin,
2a Sráid Chaoimhín Íoch., Baile Átha Cliath 8.
Meitheamh, 1974.

Why Publicity?

The importance of communicating efficiently in an inceasingly complex world is appreciated by practically every company, group and organisation in the world. It has led to the growth of the huge expensive "Publicity and Public Relations" industry. The importance attached to it by everybody from the Churches to the politicians to the international corporations is reflected in the increasingly large salaries which persons who are thought to be experienced in the art of effective and favourable communications are commanding.

"Publicity" as the word suggests means making something public. In the case of ordinary business firms for example, whose main aim is to sell their goods and make profits, their publicity aims consist of telling the public at every opportunity about their product or service, gaining acceptance from the public that theirs is the "best" product or service, while at the same time ensuring as far as possible that no aspect of company activities (e. g. allegations about bad workmanship or poor staff conditions) takes from the overall "good image".

This is achieved through various activities, — advertising, public relations work, sponsorship of worthwhile community projects, etc. The aim is to get "good publicity", to counteract "bad publicity" (by anticipating trouble before it arises if possible) and to consciously and constantly promote the "message" (or product) by keeping it before the public at every opportunity through every possible means. It means keeping in the public eye and constantly seeking new ways of keeping before the public.

For the ordinary commercial concern which needs only to promote its economic interest, the task is reasonably clear-cut and relatively simple. For other bodies, especially those who are seeking to promote ideals and to win over new recruits to their point of view, it is a more complex task. It is more difficult still for political movements, especially if many methods of publicity — including some which may have been established to express opposing points of view — are hostile to your cause. The essential point therefore is to realise that a lot of the results of your activities in almost any sphere will be lost if the public is not fully informed about them. Members of the public may or may not be won to your point of view as a result of your actions. But if they are not informed of what you are doing, of what you believe, of where you stand on issues that affect them, they cannot be expected to make a favourable choice.

There is also the negative side of the question. Publicity is vital to counteract the efforts of opponents who will seize on every opportunity to misrepresent your point of view. Publicity

is a vital part of the major task of political education in which Sinn Féin is engaged. It is the **major tool** in ensuring increasing support in our struggle for the life of the Irish nation. It is the most effective weapon in our effort to ensure that we are not misrepresented. And it is the best way to see to it that maximum benefit is gained from the blood, sweat and tears of all those who are working for the Republican ideal — an Éire Nua.

Large powerful companies spend thousands, even millions of pounds each year to ensure that their voice is effectively heard. All governments appreciate the absolute necessity of "good", effective publicity. This does not always have to cost large sums of money — though money to pay for staff and other resources is a great help! But it does mean that we use whatever publicity resources we have to the maximum possible effect. And it involves an acceptance of the fact of life that publicity has to be handled on a **regular, planned and systematic basis.** It entails constant effort. Rescue operations, "fire-brigade" operations, when something goes wrong, are quite simply not good enough. Having accepted this central fact we can now examine the principal things that need to be done.

Publicity — Getting the Message Across

Because those who are dependent on the arts of communication for a living tend to shroud the whole matter in a degree of mystery, some members of voluntary movements, like Sinn Féin, tend to shy away from the matter — and to neglect a vital part of their work of public education. Professional economists tend to create the same reluctance in ordinary people to engage in financial discussions about matters, which, if they are reduced to their essentials, are basically very simple.

Let us therefore establish the fundamentals: there is need for a CONSTANT, REGULAR PUBLICITY EFFORT AT ALL LEVELS AND IN ALL PRACTICAL WAYS.

This is necessary in order to:

(a) Promote effective internal communications within the movement.

(b) Ensure the public is informed about our policies and activities.

(c) Play a part in the general task of public education aimed at gaining extra support and winning new recruits for our point of view.

(d) Counteract attacks, misrepresentation and publicity efforts by our political opponents.

Do not shroud Sinn Féin in mystery.

(e) Ensure maximum results from the work and achievements of our members.

A. Internal Communication

This is often neglected even by those who may pay considerable attention to general publicity. It is vital, so that members are clear about what they are doing, why they are doing it, how they fit into the general scheme of things. It is also essential for the leadership so that they can gauge the "pulse" of the movement, be fully aware of the strength and weakness of various parts of the organisation, and base policy and plans to improve performance at all levels on an accurate picture of a realistic situation. Two-way dialogue, from the top down, and from the bottom up, is essential to a healthy growing movement. It leads to better relations all round and results in the development of new and better ideas and methods of working from the ranks of those who are actively engaged in the work.

Internal publicity need not be an expensive or complex matter. If it becomes too complicated it will only result in wasting the time of persons whose main aim should be to try to influence those outside the movement. A simple internal news sheet — even a well edited and neatly laid out stencil page —

can be quite efficient. In internal news sheets the emphasis should be on the collection of news items of interest to members and on its presentation in a short, readable and interesting way. It should also contain some items of general interest which may be of assistance to members in their work, and where possible, material which members may not be in a position to come at easily. This and material about general Sinn Féin activities should be collected regularly and circulated as quickly and frequently as possible.

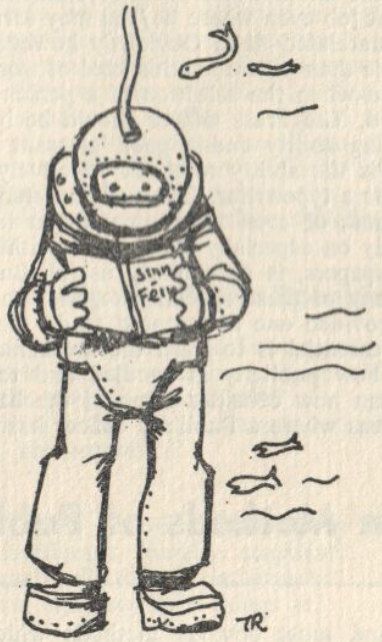
NOTE: Material about internal matters should always be written, even in internal news-letters, in such a way as not to compromise the movement if it falls into opponents' hands. Every effort should be made to ensure that **internal material** remains within Sinn Féin hands. And while certain precautions can be taken to ensure that this remains the case (e.g. by destroying news-letters before throwing them away) it remains a simple fact that any written material can and sometimes does fall into the hands of those who would wish to use it to attack us.

B. External Publicity

External publicity is a primary consideration and needs to be pursued at all levels and on all fronts throughout the entire organisation. We have seen in our educational programme the necessity to act as an outward-looking group and to remain in

Be both outward and forward looking.

constant contact and communication with the public. If we do not do this we will become isolated from the people and never succeed in gaining their support. External publicity is perhaps the main way in which we must set about this task.



. . . even though he may earn his living in an entirely unrelated field

Every section of the movement therefore should be publicity conscious and should regard the promotion of good publicity as a major part of its task. In order to ensure this each section must be both outward and forward looking. Each section should have a press and publicity officer who should work in close liaison with the officers at each level — Ard-Chomhairle, Dáil Ceantair, Comhairle Ceantair, Cumann, etc. He/she should see to it that no opportunity is lost to publicise the aims and activities of the section. He/she should consciously seek ways and means whereby the movement's policies and philosophy can be put forward to as wide an audience as possible. He/she should always be on the look out for issues and occasions in which Sinn Féin should be involved and ready to put forward their own philosophy for the solution of whatever problems may be facing an individual/group/community, etc. The Press Officer should also be on the look-out, and in some cases even

anticipate, attacks or misrepresentation of our aims, ideals and objectives and ensure that these are counteracted at once.

A Press/Publicity Officer can learn a substantial part of the trade and with a little common sense and a little education (like studying this booklet and other recommended reading) do quite an efficient job even where he/she may earn his/her living in an entirely unrelated field. Obviously however, some people are more suitable than others for this kind of work — something to be considered when the selection of a person for the task is being considered. The Press Officer should be bright, alert and educated. Writing ability and a good pleasant personality are advantages. So is the ability to speak effectively in public, and the ability to use a typewriter. Obviously a person with a journalistic background, or even someone with an interest in news or who is simply on especially good terms with local reporters, editors or newspapers, is particularly useful. But one does not have to be in any of these special categories to be an efficient Press Officer provided one is prepared to do the homework. In short, the one essential is to learn the mechanics of the trade, to understand how publicity is handled and to work hard at the task. We can now consider some of the basics of the job in the major areas where a Publicity Officer has to operate.

The Main Methods of Publicity

The main, and most obvious methods which a voluntary organisation like ours will use in promoting its aims and ideas amongst the public include:

1. PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meetings are traditionally a major part of the publicity effort of political organisations. Even though there has been some decline in their use in recent years, with the advent of television, etc. they remain a very important part of the publicity machine. The location, time, frequency, etc. of such meetings will vary with circumstances. Generally they are held in places and at times when there is a good chance of attracting an audience, e.g. outside churches before elections, on fair days in rural towns, in seaside resorts during the summer, on the eve of major G.A.A. games, etc.

But other factors can also influence the decision to hold a public meeting. For example, if there is a burning public issue, on which Sinn Féin wishes to express a point of view, in some particular area. It should also be pointed out that public meetings frequently are organised with more than the immediate aim

of addressing those who attend in mind. They can be a show of strength and support. They afford an opportunity to present prominent spokesmen to the public. They present a platform for such spokesmen to make a speech which, hopefuly, may be widely reported. They can stimulate an interest in papers and literature which may be sold in conjunction with the meeting. They indicate a "presence" of the organisation in an area. Meetings may be held in the open or in halls, hotels or other suitable indoor premises. They may be organised by Sinn Féin directly, or Sinn Féin can nominate a speaker to a panel which has been invited by some non-political group to discuss a topical issue. In all cases however, the effectiveness of your publicity (apart from reports of the speech in the papers, etc. — which will be dealt with later) depends on the public speaking effectiveness of your spokesman.

1. i. Notes on Effective Public Speaking

Before you speak **think** about the following points:

(a) What **type of audience** are you going to talk to?
(b) What is the **purpose** of your talk?
(c) What **subject matter** do you want to include?
(d) How will you **present** it?

A. The Audience

(i) What is their general attitude likely to be — interested, indifferent, friendly, sceptical?
(ii) How much will they know already?
(iii) How fast can they take things in?

B. Your Purpose

Do you aim:

(i) To give the background? (So long as they get the general picture it will do).
(ii) To give detailed information? (They must remember certain things).
(iii) To put forward a point of view? (They must be influenced and interested).
(iv) To teach a particular skill? (They must know the drill from A to Z).
(v) To outline a proposed course of action? (They must be clear about what is required of them).

You may have different objectives at different stages in your talk.

C. Subject Matter

(i) Collect your material.
(ii) Sort out your ideas and group them.
(iii) Decide which groups will form your introduction, main arguments and conclusions.

D. Presentation

* Speak clearly and audibly — do not put on a special voice; speak naturally.
* Speak to the audience — not to one corner.
* Avoid mannerisms — like jingling coins, fiddling with notes, etc.
* Show your enthusiasm — your topic may be old to you but fresh to the audience.
* Give your audience time **to take in** what you are saying.
* Hammer home your main points.
* Summarise and conclude smartly. Above all avoid a bedraggled ending.

Do not put on a special voice.

Everybody has a natural style of speaking which only needs to be developed and cultivated. Be yourself and do not try to put on an act. Speak as you normally talk, but with more **emphasis, continuity, liveliness** and **illustration.**

One final point. Truth and cold logic are the best weapons in a propaganda war. Be sure of your facts and speak realistically. The best speech is the one which contains 90% cold reason and 10% emotion. Say what you have to say, state your point of view — and shut up. Shorter speeches are usually better received than long ones.

1. ii Organising Public Meetings

To gain maximum benefit from public meetings (in the open or indoors) it is necessary to engage in detailed planning and considerable simple but essential work **before and after** as well

as on the night of the event itself. You will need a venue or a location. You will need to pick a suitable time (e.g. when it is convenient for people to come, when there are large numbers of people in the area, etc.). You will need speakers and a topic which will arouse interest. Book your venue well in advance. If you are organising an open-air meeting, make sure that you have a platform, lorry, public address system, etc. all arranged. Book your speakers well in advance and make specific plans about how they will arrive, in time, for the meeting — whether they will come themselves or are to be collected, where, and by whom, etc. Select an efficient chairman who will ensure that the meeting gets under way on time and does not go on too long.

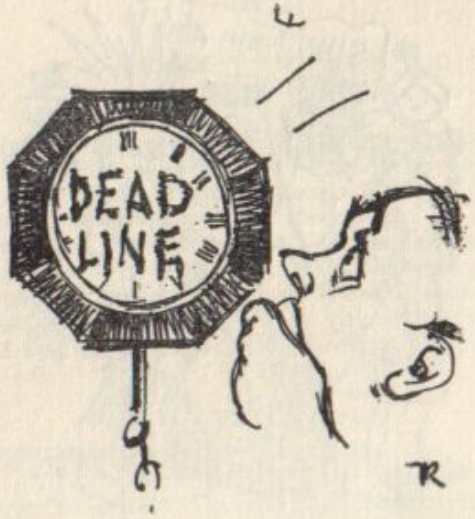
If you wish to discuss a topic which is of interest to you and which you want to interest the public in, try and get a few speakers who are well known and who will attract listeners because of their standing within the organisation. "No prophet is accepted in his own country" they say. Certainly speakers from outside the area can give a meeting added novelty. Speakers personally involved in the matter under discussion are worth looking for, e.g. a speaker from the North who has had personal experience of internment or British Army brutality will attract more attention in the South than someone who has only second hand knowledge. If you are relying on local speakers then it is

Speakers from outside the area can give a meeting added novelty.

usually better to get them to talk about matters which involve the potential audience personally, e.g. the closing of a local factory, the adverse effects of EEC membership, etc. or which are hot topics of controversy, e.g. repressive legislation.

Pre-publicity is vital. This involves several aspects of the publicity machine which is the main theme of this booklet. Try and get advance notice about the meeting in the press — as a news item or as a paid advertisement. Invite local editors and reporters to cover the event. Highlight any interesting or newsworthy angles, e.g. the first visit of some well-known figure to the town, "the first meeting at which this issue will be discussed in..." "the first public meeting to protest about..." (Newsmen like to hear about unusual events or "firsts").

Inform local reporters personally about what is proposed, and promise co-operation. This also applies to photographers. If they tell you they cannot make it offer to get them a script from the main speakers **summarising** their main points in advance — and then make sure that you get it for them! This is particularly true where speakers known nationally are visiting provincial areas. Quite frequently the report sent in from a local source from an acredited correspondent has a better chance of making the daily papers than a detailed hand-out submitted in advance in Dublin. Each area has its own press pattern. Find out what it is and play the game according to the rules of the men who operate it.



Plan well in advance.

Pre-publicity can take several other forms — posters, handbills, touring the town with a loud-speaker, mentioning the meeting casually in places of work, to others who are likely to spread the news, announcements at dances and other functions, notices in colleges, canteens, etc., mention in local news-sheets, "An Phoblacht", etc. Always bear in mind that the "deadline" for most of these media is well in advance of the date of the meeting itself — in several cases over a week in advance. Plan your meeting well in advance. Plan your publicity well in advance also. Draw up a time-table of what is to be done under the various headings and who is to do it. See that it is done on time.

On the occasion of the meeting and immediately after it the good Publicity Officer will be very busy. Find out what press people attended. Try to have scripts for them. Help them if they cannot identify some of the speakers on the platform. Volunteer the names of people, (left to right) in pictures which a photographer may take. If the press fail to turn up ring them afterwards and offer them summaries of what was said or took place — if they have not been given advance scripts already.

In general try to ensure that meetings are run smoothly, efficiently and on time. Try to highlight any newsworthy angles. Give the press every co-operation and thank all those who helped in any way with the publicity effort.

2. Sales of Papers

The official papers of the movement are a vital and long-lasting link with the public. The written word remains long after the speech has been made or the heated argument concluded. People sympathetic to Sinn Féin or interested in its stand buy our papers to find out what we are thinking and to see what we have to say on the events of the day. Every effort is made to ensure that they get this service, despite the many special editorial difficulties. Our papers are also a vital method of combating the censorship which some of the establishment media exercise against us. They ensure that we get a full hearing on any issue. While they are successful and can pay their way it is much more difficult for other papers to refuse to carry our newsworthy material.

Selling papers therefore is an extremely important if not too glamorous task. Sales need to be continually boosted to ensure a sound financial footing for the publications and to get our message across to the widest possible audience under the most favourable circumstances. Republican papers should be worth their price in ordinary commercial and journalistic terms as well as providing the movement with an effective voice.

The most important points for those engaged in paper selling however, are to ensure that the publications are available as easily as possible to regular readers, to interested sympathisers, etc., while at the same time to push sales amongst other sections. **Sales in pubs one night a week are not enough. Most people never go into pubs — on any night of the week.** Find other outlets. Try new methods of sale as an experiment. Occasional house to house drives in new areas will test public reaction and give you an opportunity to talk to people. Pinpoint occasions and areas where there may be a high circulation of new people from time to time, e.g. seaside resorts in summer, fleánna ceoil, football matches, certain shopping streets on Saturdays. Try to win regular readers who will order the paper from regular outlets — and allow you time to concentrate on new pastures.

... house to house drives in new areas ...

3. Sales of Literature

The sales of literature as part of the general process of educating people within and outside the movement is mentioned elsewhere. But it is vital to get our literature into circulation as part of the general publicity drive also, and into the hands of the more serious-minded and interested members of the public in particular. The amount of literature which we can sell through bookshops and other normal outlets is important but there are difficulties. This means that active members and those concentrating on publicity in particular must take the sale of literature seriously. A wide range of material is available from head-office. So also is a list of the titles on offer. All these are attractively produced and are good value for money for interested readers. There are generous profit margins and special terms for bulk buying.

We know there is a market for the material but cumainn are not bothering enough about this vital task. The establishment of a Republican bookstall in major centres of population and in areas where people circulate freely should be seriously considered. Such an arrangement again presents an important opportunity to meet and talk to people. If a bookstall is operated on a regular basis people come to know where they can go and when in order to get the latest Republican viewpoint, policy or publicity material. Seaside towns are a good example of towns which may not have a large population but provide important points of contact during the summer season. Moreover, general book market research shows that people tend to buy literature on a day out, or on holidays, which they normally might not buy from their local shop back home.

4. Letters to the Press

Letters to the newspapers are among the cheapest and most efficient means of publicity and should be written much more frequently. Traditionally regarded by the press as a means whereby the individual can openly express his point of view or correct attacks or misrepresentation, they can also be used by groups, e.g. a cumann. In many cases they provide the "small guy", the underdog, with a better platform to present his case that the normal press statement — which should be reserved as a rule for wider issues and official comments. Many newspapers cultivate a flow of letters, to create controversy (this is good for sales) and to prove the wide readership of their journal. Generally they are reluctant to reject letters which are "reasonable" — especialy if failure to publish can lead to accusations of censorship. "Reasonable" cases (defined in a moment) usually are given the "right to reply" — even where the case is entirely contrary to the paper's known editorial policy. But because one of the aims of publishing letters in any case is to provide controversy and because "reasonableness" usually means a point of view which does not involve a major risk of legal action, loss of major advertisers, and a case which will not alienate any major portion of the readership, we need to be careful — and to use our letter-writing efforts wisely.

Letters ought to contain the truth. **Facts** should be checked beforehand. **Opinions** can be freer but all letters should be direct,

logical and sharp. Long letters are generally refused and even if they are published few people tend to read them. Each letter should be looked on as a battle — or an ambush. We must always remember that others too have a right to reply. Do not leave yourself open to further accusations. Do not make statements that are difficult to defend or prove, that will antagonise others and that will broaden the scope of the particular controversy. Picture letter writing as a chess game, i.e. if we say this, what can the other fellow say. Don't shoot every round in a first letter. If you decide to reply to some report or charge, do so quickly.

Avoid personal attacks as a rule but if you feel it is justified, do so in a genial, satirical, even humorous way. Ridicule can be very effective and insinuation often much more destructive than open accusation. Try not to give the impression of bitterness, of being a complainer. Be reasonable and try to convey the

Don't get angry yourself.

impression of seriousness about the central point of your letter, i.e. the one on which you feel you are on strongest ground. Give your opponent in a controversy every opportunity to hang himself with his own words or in an angry reaction to your gentle presentation of the opposite case. Don't get angry yourself. Write your letter the night before. Leave it until morning and read it carefully again before you decide to put it in the post! If, as is usually the case, you feel you should re-write the letter in the morning — do so at once.

N.B. The same advice applies when preparing statements or comments on your reaction to some bit of news. If a reporter rings you for a comment on something, say very little which can be quoted against you later on. If you can, play for time.

Say you have not fully considered the matter, have not seen the news item, etc. and could you ring back, even in a half hour? Hang up and think. Then, when you have considered everything — including possible reactions to what you intend to say — contact your reporter again.

Technical presentation can also mean the difference between the publication and non-publication of letters. Think of it from the point of view of the letters' editor, who is a busy man. His favourite type of letter, and consequently the one most likely to find its way into the paper, is brief, to the point, interesting, typewritten clearly in double spacing, with good margins and on one side of the paper only. If you have to use handwriting, make sure it is good and big and clear. Always keep a copy of the letter, (to check against what appears) give a full name and address and if possible a phone number where the editor can check that the letter is genuine.

Letters to the Editor can be of two varieties: 1. Official letters e.g. from a Cumann or a Cumann Officer, or 2. personal letters from individuals, ordinary members of the public be they open and identified members of Sinn Féin or not. In certain situations individuals who may have some personal connection with the controversy involved, may get a better hearing than persons with an obvious "line" or axe to grind.

5. Press Statements

It can perhaps be said that this is the age of the press-statement, or press-release and that we are all tempted to send statements to the paper for the least excuse. This can make news editors tire of us, and reduce our credibility in their eyes — especially if some of the statements contain no real news. Like the goose and the golden eggs, press-statements should only be used when they are necessary and when there is no better way. This is not to say that an organisation should not provide a **regular** flow of statements — provided there is something new or interesting in each one. The main aim of the press-release is to bring items of news, which might otherwise go un-noticed, to the attention of editors. It can also be used to supply the text of speeches, on important occasions, which might otherwise go un-reported either because the paper in question is unable to send a reporter due to pressure of business or because the paper needs a copy in advance to meet publishing dead-lines.

Because editors receive a flood of "hand-outs" from all types of sources every day, and since they have other sources of news, to stand any chance of being read (let alone used in print) the

statements must conform to the requirements of the recipients. The main requirements are:

- That the information be of interest to the particular publication.
- That it has news value.
- That it is written and presented in an understandable form.
- That the information is not stale.
- That it reaches the right person — the News Editor in most cases.

Ideally, different press-releases should be prepared for different types of media. For example the interests of the national press are not the same as those of a provincial weekly. Radio and television need short urgent statements. The Political Correspondent, the Financial Editor and the Woman's Editor of a paper all have their own particular interest or "angle" on stories. Normally if a press-release is well written, reasonably detailed and well presented the one general statement will suffice and each medium will be able to pick what interests it from the general release.

Obviously a person with some journalistic or writing experience, someone who knows how newspapermen act and think, has an advantage in preparing such material. But this is by no means necessary. In fact some ex-journalists make very bad Public Relations men, for two reasons. Firstly they forget that they are "ex" and still write as if they were on the other side of the fence. Secondly, they tend to "fill out" to "puff" the material into the kind of story they used to write for their newspapers when they should in fact concentrate on giving facts, the bones of the story, in a clear and straightforward manner.

Golden Rules for Issuing Press-releases

1. Issue statement on official notepaper if you have it. If not, be sure to give the name of the cumann or group issuing it, the date, the address and phone number. Give an after-hours home number of a cumann officer so that the statement can be checked at any time, even when there is nobody in the office (if there is one).

2. Duplicate the statement (after checking it carefully) on good paper.

3. Statements should be typed on one side of the paper only, with a good space between the lines and a good margin (up to two inches) on the left-hand side.

4. If you cannot get the statement typed, write clearly and legibly and allow as much space as mentioned at 3 above.

5. Give the main news item in the first paragraph e.g. It was announced this evening that Sinn Féin will contest local

elections in Sligo in two areas. You can then develop the story in subsequent paragraphs. If you cannot get the main story from the first paragraph then your release is badly written.

6. Apart from the first paragraph, which is not indented, all subsequent paragraphs are indented two or three spaces. This is the format used by most newspapers.

7. Leave a good space on the right-hand margin also and at least two inches between the printed heading and the first line of the story. (This is to allow the sub-editor space to "mark-up" the copy).

8. Keep paragraphs short, as they invariably are in newspapers.

9. Provide answers to the following questions in your statement: who? how? where? why? and what?

10. Each release should have a headline typed in capital letters, **but not underlined.** This is because underlined material is usually set automatically in italics by a printer. Apart from the headline no words should be typed in capitals except in very special circumstances. The headline should indicate the subject of the release. It should be factual and never clever or humorous. That is the sub-editor's job!

11. Quotation marks should only be used when actual speech is being quoted or where you are quoting material from another source. Where a passage being quoted runs to more than one paragraph, the second and subsequent paragraphs must be opened with quotation marks.

12. Do not start a paragraph with a numeral. Where this is unavoidable spell it out. (e.g. Sixty people . . . instead of 60 people . . .) Normally it is better to re-write the paragraph to avoid this.

13. Numbers one to ten should be spelt out (e.g. seven) except when used with the £ sign, etc. Numerals should be used for all other numbers, although thousands and millions are often spelt out for the sake of clarity.

14. You should write out other measurements fully e.g. 15 per cent (not 15%); 18 inches (not 18") etc.

15. Generally, you may dispense with full stops between initial abbreviations e.g. RTÉ, BBC, etc.

16. Where a press-release runs to more than one page, never split the paragraph over two pages. Either re-write or leave more space at the bottom of the page. When the release consists of more than one page you should type: Continued . . Cont'd . . or More . . at the bottom of all pages except the last.

17. After the final paragraph of a statement you may, if you wish, type "ends" or some other recognisable symbol.

18. Unless the information is given at the top of the first page on the release, at the bottom of the final page you should

Check everything. And remember always: "if in doubt . . . leave out."

type: For further information please contact:
(name and telephone number)

Since the above does not form part of the actual release, it can be single-spaced.

19. Multi-page releases should have a key word or "catch-line" typed at the top left-hand side of each page.

20. Every release should carry the date of issue, which is not necessarily the same as the date on which it was produced. You can give the date either at the beginning or end of the statement, though common sense suggests that the former is more logical.

21. It is recommended that each release also contain a reference number, not only for convenience with your own files (you should keep at least two copies of each statement) but in order to answer questions about a particular statement which may be put to you at a later date.

22. Before typing the statement for duplication check it carefully for errors of any kind. Having duplicated the release check the quality of reproduction before issuing it.

23. If you are sending a photograph with the release (see section on photographs) a note to this effect should be appended to the bottom of the release.

24. When a press-release relates to a speech, which has not been made when issued, e.g. at a press-conference, you should type in capital letters at the beginning and end of the release: PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY.

25. Do not place an embargo on a press-release unless it is strictly necessary. Apart from speeches the main reason for an embargo is to give local papers the same opportunity as the daily press. This means sending it out a day or two earlier to the provincials before giving it to the nationals.

A speech is embargoed to guard against the possibility of it not being made at all, or being made by a person different from the one announced. Do not type "for immediate release" on a statement if there is no embargo.

26. As with letters to the paper, check and re-check everything before you issue your press-statement.

Press-release Check-list

* *People*
(a) Full name.
(b) Correct spelling.
(c) Honours, etc.
(d) Age.
(e) Marital status.
(f) Children.
(g) Where they live.
(h) Where they work.
(i) What they do.
(j) Hobbies, interests.
(k) Nationality.
(l) Any other interesting item of information which may attract the attention of a specialist editor, reporter or magazine or may help to give the story a local, regional, or other extra interest or flavour.

* **Events**
(a) What.
(b) Where.
(c) When.
(d) Why.
(e) How.

* **Places**
(a) Town.
(b) County.
(c) Famous for.

* **Things**
(a) What.
(b) Made of
(c) Made by
(d) When made
(e) Where and when available.

*. **Reasons for the Release**
(a) Is it news?
(b) Is it topical?
(c) Is it giving too much "opinion" without enough facts?
(d) **Are you sure?**

The above is a detailed guide to the ideal method of handling practically any press-statement. Of course it is never as simple as that and circumstances will dictate that you drop some of the less essential requirements sometimes. The most crucial factor which will force you to abandon near-perfection is time. If the story is good, make sure you get in there with it. Newspapers are prepared to ignore a lot to get a good story. But generally speaking every effort should be made to present your statements in as professional a manner as possible. When you are anxious for publicity for some matter which may not be all that interesting (and you cannot have head-line material every time) the layout and presentation of your press-release can often determine whether it appears in print or ends up in the waste-paper basket.

Cultivating channels of communication

Each section of the organisation should try to build up a pool of good will and direct channels of communication with the press in their area. This is possible even where the papers or reporters in question disagree fundamentally with you. Most newsmen are prepared to give breaks to those who play the game in a professional way. Your organisation, the things you do and the information you have, both within and without press-releases, is the very basis of journalists' livelihood.

Try to be on good terms with your local reporter/editor. Agree to disagree if necessary. If you have occasion to criticise the press do so in a careful manner and make sure your accusations

Try to be on good terms with your local reporter.

have a foundation in fact which you can stand over. **Never blame a staff reporter for the editorial policy of his paper.** If you engage in an argument with an editor over policy suggest that you understand there may be other pressures, that he does his best normally, etc.

If a paper fails to carry what you consider to be an important statement, be very reluctant to accuse it directly of censorship. Let it be known that you appreciate that there were difficulties with dead-lines, a shortage of space, etc. — and would they be kind enough to carry it in the next issue? Ask if there is anything on your side of the fence you can do to ensure effective lines of communication for your material. Usually there is. Note carefully any suggestions or requests especially from friendly journalists — and act on them.

Cultivating the physical lines of communication

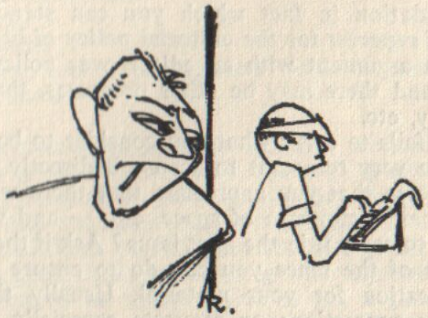
All too frequently good press-statements, which have been prepared at considerable expense and after much trouble never see the light of day because there is a breakdown in **the physical line of communication.** The statement is not posted in time, is lost in transit, does not reach the right man, etc. You should ensure that these problems are overcome.

Normally it is better to bring your statement to the office and hand it personally to the News Editor, political correspondent or whoever is in charge. If you have to post it, you may call the office to enquire if it arrived and ask if you can help in any other way, e.g. by clarifying any points or providing more background to the story. Always be courteous and patient. Remember the man you are dealing with may have several tasks in hand. Usually he may not have been responsible for the decision not to publish something you sent him earlier.

If you feel your statement was deliberately rejected and you feel it is important call the editor and put your case to him. Newspapers depend on the good will of the public and no editor wants to think he is a dictator who forces his own opinions on them. No editor likes the rumour to go around that he is a censor; he would rather like to consider his paper as being an important medium of communication for the public, and a place where all sections feel they can have their say. Editors are generally careful if also cute. And while there are exceptions, most are willing to listen to what every section of the public has to say.

But editors will sometimes throw your statements in the basket if they think they can get away with it. You have to let them know that you are watching them. There are two points involved here which can be put forward with force and conviction:

1. He should be prepared to give reasonable publicity to



Let them know you are watching them.

those who are against the system and want to change it.

2. He should be prepared to give every group a fair deal.

6. Press Photographs

Press photographs, though more difficult for the voluntary publicity man, can be of great value and need to be considered. In the case of several stories one picture can be worth a thousand words — as we all saw on the 5th October 1968 in Derry. One of the main tasks of the publicity officer in this field therefore is to "cultivate" press photographers in the same way as reporters. Try to get your meetings, commemorations, etc. covered by cameramen. For one thing, it saves you all the work and newspapers tend to give preference to the work of their own staff or representatives. Cameramen are particularly useful at demonstrations. For one thing they ensure that attacks by police or opponents will be more restrained. As in the case of reporters always give every co-operation possible to cameramen.

Apart from this direct co-operation with photo-journalists, each publicity officer should also consider building up a small photographic library. A head and shoulders photo of all main officers, etc. should be available on request. So should pictures of e.g. well-known speakers who may be visiting the area for meetings. A photo can be issued with a press-release when it makes the news more interesting. Sometimes papers will carry a photo, e.g. of a commemoration, when they are not interested in a long account of the speeches, etc. There are no hard and fast rules. But bear in mind that photographs are expensive, that the majority of those submitted to papers never get published and that you should not normally send them unless you have a good chance of publication. As with press-releases

however there are some rules of a technical nature which should be observed to ensure a maximum chance of publication. These include:

1. Use only glossy prints. Matt and sepia tones are not suitable for newspaper publication.
2. Prints should normally be half plate size ($6\frac{1}{2}$ X $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches).
3. Photographs should be sharp (in focus) and contain good graduations in tone.
4. If a photograph is sent through the post, it should be sent either in a cardboard-backed envelope or in an envelope in which a cardboard stiffener has been placed.
5. An envelope containing photographs should indicate this. The best wording, on the outside, is: **Photographs — please do not bend.**
6. Never write anything on the back of a photograph with a biro or hard pencil. The pressure may show on the other side and may render the picture unsuitable for publication. If you must write on the back use a **soft** pencil.
7. The normal way to indicate what the photo is about is to type the information on ordinary white paper. Cut and attach to the back of the photograph. (This is what is called a "Caption").

Captions should always be typed individually. If you attach a carbon copy to some pictures it is obvious that other papers have got the same picture — and this reduces the chances of publication in a competitive newspaper situation.

Never place a photograph under anything on which somebody might write.

8. Never attach a photograph to a letter, etc. with a paper clip, staple or pin — the indention will probably militate against publication.
9. Always try to keep photographs flat. If you have to roll or bend them do so with the glossy side facing out as this way the cracks in the emulsion will close rather than open when it is flattened out again.
10. When you have several photographs in a file, stack them alternatively face to face and back to back. This prevents scratching of surfaces.
11. Do not issue photographs to the press if they are subject to copyright. When issuing your own photographs stamp the back with the words "Copyright free" followed by your name or the name of the organisation. Include a "With compliments" slip if you have one.
12. Captions (see 7 above) should ideally consist of a headline and not more than 40-50 words. When sent with a press-release both headlines should be the same or very similar. Consider a caption as being a mini press-release and you will not go far wrong.
13. The initials, name and rank, office, etc. of everybody in the photograph should be given in the Caption. Names should

read from left to right (When looking at the picture). The information contained in the caption should read thus: **Photo shows: (left to right)** or **(L to R) front rank . . . rear rank . . .**

14. As with press-releases captions should contain the name and telephone number of the person issuing it. In addition both caption and photograph should have a reference number. Since captions are often removed, it is useful to stamp the back of the photograph itself if you have a stamp.

15. If the number of photographs is limited and you want to send it only to those papers you are sure will use them you can always put a note at the bottom of the press-release stating **"photos are available on request".**

16. Do not ask for photographs to be returned if not used.

17. If you decide to engage a photographer for some important occasion get somebody who is experienced as a **journalistic photographer.** Your local paper's reporter may be prepared to do some extra work for you for a fee, or let you have extra copies of something he is covering in any case, as long as this does not conflict with his responsibility to his own paper.

7. Press Conferences

A press conference, at the best of times, is a difficult exercise, even for professionals. It should only be called when there is good reason. The story must be important enough and you must be sure before you start that everything possible has been done to ensure that, at least, there is no adverse result for your organisation. If possible drinks and light refreshments should be available but Cumainn cannot always afford this. If so nobody should be ashamed. Contrary to popular belief, press conferences do not need lots of food and drink to be a success. If the story is good the reporters will come and use it. Many in fact may wish to leave quickly as they have other stories to attend to.

Although press conferences are usually planned well in advance there are occasions when one has to hold them at very short notice. This should happen only when there is something very important and urgent to announce, in which case getting the press to attend will be the least of your worries. In any case careful planning and attention to detail are very important for this type of operation. If you find, after ringing one or two of what are in the circumstances the most important papers for a particular story, that they tell you they may be unable to cover the event it may be that they are politely hinting that the story is not important enough to merit a press conference. Issue a press-release, or if the matter is urgent and topical, telephone

the information to the main papers.

If the news is not "hot", e.g. a reaction to something else, if it is something like the launching of a new booklet or pamphlet or policy, then the time for the announcement can vary and the place and venue of the launching should be selected with a view to facilitating the press and getting maximum coverage. There may also be options of a symbolic nature, e.g. launching the booklet when the author is in the area, before a significant commemoration date, in a town or district which is relevant to the matter in the booklet, etc. Factors which always need to be considered include:

* The day of the week on which you will hold the press conference.
* The most suitable time of the day.
* The venue.
* Who should be invited.
* What refreshments, if any, and if so
* How much and when.

The day and the time will depend to some extent on who is available to speak, but more importantly on the papers and other media you hope to have represented. This, in turn, will depend on the subject matter of the conference and on the deadlines — radio, TV, daily papers, weekly papers, etc. — which the various media have to meet. This varies enormously with the type of press conference. But you will have some idea of the places you most want the publicity to appear.

Generally you will favour the press rather than the others involved, speakers, etc. and will try to accommodate your friends in the press rather than doubtfuls who may be invited only as a matter of courtesy. If you are not sure, ring a friend in one of the media you deem important for the particular story and seek his advice. Follow it to the extent it makes sense — and not simply the best chance for his particular publication.

As for food and drink neither should be provided until the main part of the conference is under way or even finished. If you start with the drink the press conference may never get off the ground and certainly will not start on time.

If you have a good story you may deliberately select the time of your press conference to suit the most important media. In Dublin this means the morning papers. Thus most major press conferences do not take place until at least about 4.00 p.m. in the day — so that the story is fresh for the following morning, and not "scooped" (usually in a most unsatisfactory way) by the evening papers which carry much less weight throughout most of the country. Also, if the evening papers carry the story you stand less chance of getting satisfactory coverage on RTÉ.

Normally the ideal for a national story is to make RTÉ for 6.00 p.m. let it run that night and let people have the printed version in the morning papers.

Because of the importance of the British press and because

passing stories from Belfast or Derry to Dublin or London takes time, press conferences in the North generally are held before noon.This, if properly managed, can ensure a good airing on lunch-time radio programmes as well (over one million people listen to the RTÉ News at One Thirty — the biggest news audience of the day in this country) but you run the risk of being phased out that evening, on television.

In other Irish centres the matter is more complicated. You have to balance the requirements of the daily papers with those of the local press, which with the exception of Cork, are all weekly papers. Normally you try to hold the press conference at a time which will enable the local papers to carry it at least within 24 hours of the time it appears in the daily press. If the local impact of the story is more important you are guided by the requirements of the local press — and this may include a request for the press statement you intend to read at the press conference a day or two in advance — to facilitate the slower type-setting facilities of many smaller local papers. It is difficult to give definite rules. Be guided by local advice, and local convention. Do not try to break the habits of the local press people.

Bear in mind that many of the local papers are effectively available on the streets of their own area a day or two before the actual publication date given, e.g. papers dated Saturday frequently appear on Thursday evening in their town of publication and are quite happy if you make your national "splash" on Friday morning. Also remember that in many cases the report sent to the national press or RTÉ by the local correspondent, who is usually full-time on the local paper, stands a better chance of being published than the hand-out you post directly to Dublin. The co-operation of local reporters therefore is vital on all fronts.

Press conferences should be started on time and should be business-like. The chairman should introduce himself and the other speakers. He should impart the story without too much detail. If a copy of the speech or statement is being circulated at the conference it is not normally necessary to read it out in full again. Refer the journalists to the script, comment on what you think is important in it and indicate that you are prepared to take questions. While officers, personalities, outsiders who are present to lend their support, etc. are part of the press conference technique, it is important to remember that press conferences are for the press and "outsiders" who are not necessary for the operation in hand should be kept to a minimum.

The information on the hand-out should be clear and accurate. Answers to questions should be exact, careful and honest. If you do not know or do not wish to commit yourself definitely on some point, say so if possible. Do not leave yourself open to misquotation. Do not get angry or sarcastic. Remain quiet-spoken, rational, humorous if necessary. Do not let the press

conference drag on or become monotonous.

Leave the answering of each question to the person most able to do so. Different members of the panel may be in a better position to answer different points. There is nothing wrong in some member of a panel volunteering to make some reply which he feels he is especially qualified to answer, unless of course a specific question is put to a specific member of the panel. Let

The press conference should be business-like.

the answering go around from panel member to member. This avoids monotony. Include men and women if possible. Be sure to have a strong young representation. If photographs are required, do a "favour" for the cameraman so that he can take an "enticing picture". Nothing vulgar or "way out" however.

Check-list for Press Conferences

1. Decide whether a press conference is really necessary.
2. Decide a suitable date, all factors considered.
3. Allocate budget
4. Fix venue and time.
5. Draw up invitation list.
6. Send out invitations. Include rough sketch-map of venue if necessary.

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7. Check acceptances and refusals — continually.
8. Arrange for catering — if you propose to offer this.
9. Check venue. See that it is clean, has ashtrays, etc. See if there are enough chairs, suitable amplification if necessary, etc.
10. Write or arrange speeches.
11. Arrange for photographic coverage, if this is thought necessary.

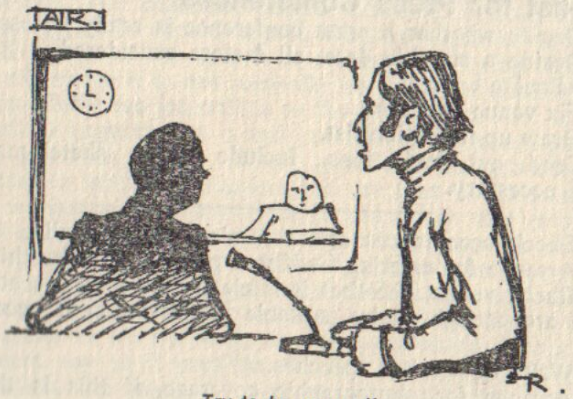
12. Get name badges for officers/speakers.
13. Arrange for visitors' book and pen.
14. Arrange for conference to be staffed. A pretty face is a great help.
15. Assemble various press-releases, literature, etc. into convenient kits. This can take more time than you think.
16. Re-check 7-15.
17. Produce final list of those expected to attend — after a final phone call to those who did not reply.
18. Brief your staff.

N.B. Carry out items above the line (1-6) in the order listed; below the line as convenient.

8. Interviews – Radio and TV

Though Sinn Féin is effectively excluded from RTÉ at present, and while radio and television interviews are something of a rarity in any case except for the national leadership, it is important to know a little about them just in case you are faced with the possibility. Also, there are occasional opportunities to give taped interviews to foreign journalists for broadcasting, or as the basis of an interview that will appear in print.

The greatest danger in giving taped or televised interviews is fear, and arising from this natural anxiety, the tendency to put on an artificial mannerism which, because it is unreal, tends to alienate people. Granted, telling those who may fear an interview that they should not do so is not much help. It is nevertheless a fact. As with public speaking you must try to be yourself. But you must collect your thoughts clearly, and try to work in your main points in as short a time as possible.



Try to be yourself.

Most radio/television interviews run to a few minutes at the most and the time appears even shorter for those involved. They rarely cover a story or a situation fully and usually solve nothing — for the person being interviewed or for the listening public. What they do do is leave **an overall impression,** an "image" of you, and by projection, of your organisation. You should therefore try to appear pleasant, even humorous, without overdoing it. Speak clearly but do not shout. Answer the questions put to you if you can — and briefly if you want to add one of your own points which may divert the trend of the interview in a favourable direction. You need to be humble and straightforward, natural and convincing. Do not appear annoyed if you are asked unfair questions. Indicate that you fully appreciate that the reporter does not believe in such a mean and unworthy thought/question/suggestion but that he has, nevertheless, the duty to put it on behalf of those who think in that ridiculous way.

Bear in mind that certain programmes, where there is a panel of speakers for example, are designed to be "shows" rather than serious discussions. If everybody else is not too serious, behave in like manner. The essential thing in radio and television is to retain **your humility and your humanity.**

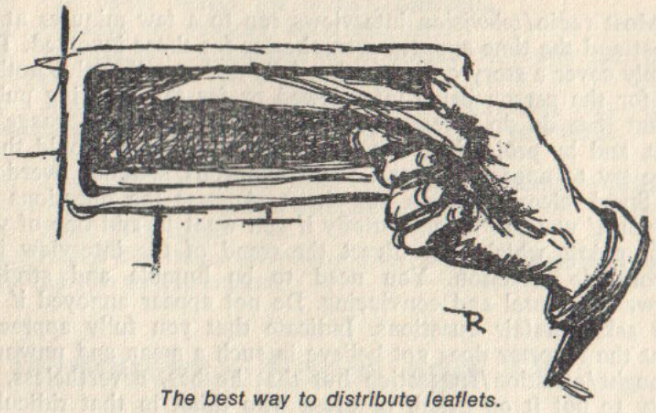
9. Leaflets

Leaflets, especially if they are being distributed free to the public, ought to be direct, clear and straight-forward. They have to be at least as interesting as the main headline on an evening newspaper, something to make a person stop and look, to make him curious, even make him laugh — they have to attract attention. But they must be more than a gimmick. They must hold interest or have a real message. They should usually contain an address and/or phone number from which further information can be had and enough to entice the average person to retain it until he has time to consider the matter again.

The best way to distribute leaflets is into the home, from door to door, through the letterbox. Distribution at church gates. in places where people assemble, etc. is usually very wasteful. Not only does the leaflet which is distributed to the home stand a far better chance of remaining around for a longer time, the exercise indicates to the public a genuine concern with the cause, a mild flattery that you bothered to deliver a copy personally to their house, — and an opportunity to meet people.

10. Pickets

Pickets, despite their regular use for all sorts of causes, are still essentially a very useful way of drawing public attention.



The best way to distribute leaflets.

They should therefore be mounted in places which are very open to the public. They should be peaceful, well marshalled and run in such a way as to convey that you are concerned with a cause, or a principle rather than an attack on personalities. Many members of the public react very unfavourably to picketing family homes. If you have a grievance against some public representative, they feel, leave his wife and family out of it. Picket his office. It usually happens that the office is in a more public place in any case.

Distinguish between continuous picketing and the march on the home of so and so to hand in a protest. Silent picketing can often be very effective. Try and cause as little annoyance as possible to the general public. As a general rule wait for a question to be put before you start to argue your case in detail. Do not get involved in heated discussions with passers-by, whatever the provocation.

Have good readable placards, which photograph well. Obviously short slogans are best. Humour and satire can be very effective — and win sympathy. Avoid vulgarity or anything which is shocking, vindictive or mean. Let your stand be based on what you know to be a good case. Let your case be a moral one. **All Sinn Féin pickets should carry a considerable number of good slogans in Irish.** Let everybody see that for us Irish a living thing and that even if some people still do not understand it that we realise that thousands of others do. Let Irish be seen and heard, in all our ranks and on all occasions.

11. Posters

Posters are in one sense, static leaflets. They should be enticing, direct, easy to understand. They need to be well spaced,

well laid out, well designed. They should contain a minimum of words — to cater for the mobile audience which you want to read them.

Their position is often as important as their message. As a general rule they should appear in places where the maximum number of people have an opportunity to read them. Erect them in places where they are likely to be left up for a long time. The higher the position the longer the life of the normal poster even if initially this means extra work. Do not erect them on private property or where they could be a definite traffic hazard. **Always have some posters on display in your area. They help to create a "presence".**

12. Advertisements

These of course cost money but for some activities the expenditure is justified, in newspapers especially. Nowadays newspapers are full of advertisements so that position and lay-out are important. As with posters and leaflets use a minimum of words. Highlight the main points, or the main attractions, e.g. if you have an important speaker at a function, stress this.

At local level, if you advertise your functions regularly try to

If you have an important speaker at a function, stress this.

establish a pattern for your advertising, e.g. a céilí always appears under the "Entertainment" heading in Friday's paper — and pass that word around.

13. Songs and Music

The poet, the ballad maker, has an important place in Irish life. Generations of our people, when other avenues of resistance were not available to them, relied on songs, stories and poems as effective propaganda weapons — and as a means of boosting their own morale in hard times. This still remains true as the events of the past few years have shown. Only today the development of modern technology, e.g. records, and modern forms of entertainment, e.g. singing lounges and hotel ballad sessions, gives the process new dimensions. It also means that a successful song or ballad about a particular incident has a greater effect on a larger number of people, e.g. the "Helicopter Song" and other recent Top Ten hits.

Such propaganda work is highly sophisticatd and is largely the preserve of the professional musical group or the talented composer. But each and every member can help to popularise these efforts. Each cumann can feature sympathetic groups at its functions. Each member can buy the right type of record, and can request patriotic numbers at ballad sessions. He can learn these songs and join in on them. He can sing them when called upon at a party or other non-movement function. Most of all, he can protest if any attempt is made to censor such items out of concerts, ballad sessions, or radio request shows.

14. Stickers and Flags

Here the effect is mainly visual. There can only be a few words. Colour, artistic impressions, etc. are important. Their main effect is to create a presence, to arouse people's interest and to make them think. Children love stickers. Wearing certain symbols on public occasions, unconnected with the movement, can be very important.

15. Any other Ideas

We have dealt with the main methods of publicity open to the normal cumann or member. There are several others, if we could only devise them and turn them into reality. Each section

of the movement should have a "bright ideas" session occasionally. Some members may have a particular talent which can be used, e.g. cartoons can be very effective, very damaging to opponents and could form a useful avenue into some newspapers and magazines. Anything that creates an awareness, a presence is important, e.g. pencils marked "in aid of prisoners' dependants" can not only make money, they find their way into the front office of every building in town. They can prick uneasy consciences and keep issues before the public mind.

16. Education and Publicity

In our educational programme we referred to the inward and the outward looking groups. Publicity in one sense is only the first step — towards getting members of the public interested in our aims and work, so that we can educate them and win them to our cause. The two things, education and publicity are linked. And the vital link between them is our literature. It provides at one and the same time further information and more detailed publicity on what we are all about for the general public, and the basic food for thought for our own members. We have already dealt with the part the sale of literature should play in our dealings with the public. (see page 12). But we should not forget ourselves and our own members. We must not only promote our literature. We should read it, study it critically if necessary, know what it is all about. We should have our answers ready when we are challenged on policy or aims and we should be able to refer people who ask us questions to the relevant documents or passages of documents.

CONCLUSION

The presence and activity of a Sinn Féin cumann should be obvious to all, both to those who live in its area of operation and to those who pass through it. This can only be achieved by **constant publicity.** We must be at it all the time, on all occasions and when every opportunity presents itself. True, there is plenty of other work to be done. But without constant and effective publicity most of it will not reap the rewards it should deserve. An active cumann without an active publicity programme simply does not make sense.